

OVID METAMORPHOSES XI

While with his songs Orpheus, the bard of Thrace,
Allured the trees and beasts of every race,
Even the rocks, the manic women there,
Who wore the skins of beasts, observed him where
They stood upon a hill not far away,
Where they could hear the Thracian singer play
Love songs. One of them, with her tangled hair
Tossing about upon the wafting air,
Yelled out, "Ah, there he is – our enemy!"
And hurled her javelin at his face as he
Was singing. Yet the weapon, overlaid
With a garland of fresh greenery, but made
A harmless bruise. Another woman flung
A stone, which by the melody being sung,
And by the lyre, was even in the air
Mastered and, thus disabled, languished there.
Before his feet as though it anxiously
Was begging pardon. This hostility
Increased without restraint, and fury ruled.
Although their spears would surely have been fooled
By Orpheus's song, the harsh disharmony
From pipes of boxwood and the thundery
Horns' blare, clapped hands and many a raucous shout
From those Bacchantes totally drowned out
His music. Now the stones which heard no more
His song were crimson with the poet's gore.
But first the maenads started threatening
The many birds who thrilled to hear him sing,
The serpents also, and the beastly throng
That listened to the worshipped poet's song
Then turned on him, gathering rapidly,
Like those wild birds who by some chance may see
The owl beneath the sun, and, like dogs who
On some bright noon the fated stag pursue
Upon the amphitheatre, similarly
They rushed at Orpheus, casting their *thyrsi*,
Now used for cruelty Some of them whirled
Clods, others branches, and yet others hurled
Flint stones at him, and, so that they might be
Stored with more weapons in their savagery,
They saw some toiling oxen close at hand
In meadows and a strong-armed peasant band
Ploughing the soil for harvest-time, and when
They caught sight of this frantic horde, these men
Ran off and left their tools all strewn around -
Spades, harrows, heavy rakes. These tools they found.

They slaughtered all the beasts then hastened to
 Destroy the harmless bard, and him they slew.
 With outstretched hands he begged for sympathy,
 But now his voice had no capacity 50
 For influence. His spirit breathed out through
 The mouth whose lovely voice all creatures knew,
 Even the rocks, and vanished in the breeze.
 The birds, the beasts, the hard flints and the trees
 Lamented him. The rivers, too, it's said,
 Were swollen with the tears that they had shed.
 Naiads and dryads with dishevelled hair
 Wore black. His limbs were scattered everywhere:
 The Hebrus gained his head and lyre, and I
 Don't have the power to tell or even try 60
 To tell you how that tuneful instrument
 Lamented Orpheus as it, floating, went
 Downstream. His tongue cried out its misery,
 Though lifeless, and the banks sighed mournfully
 In answer. Finally they reached the shore
 Of Lesbos at Methymna. Hardly more
 Than one second a serpent rose up and
 Attacked the poet's head. There on the sand
 He lay, his head still wet with ocean spray.
 At last Phoebus appeared and took away 70
 The head and drove it off before its sting
 It could inflict upon him, hardening
 Its jaws to stone. The poet had by then
 To Hades fled, and he, recalling when
 He'd been there once before, Eurydice
 Sought out and, when he found her, eagerly
 Kissed her. They wandered side by side, although
 Sometimes she'd lead and sometimes *he* would go
 Ahead of *her*, but when he looked behind
 To gaze at her, it was always to find 80
 That they were safe. The maenads' wickedness
 Bacchus would punish: grieving in distress
 For him who sang his rites, with roots he bound
 The feet of everyone who had been found
 Guilty of murder, so he thrust their feet
 Into the earth. As when a bird will beat
 Its wings, caught in a snare and struggling
 To free itself and thereby tightening
 The knot yet more, each one of them, when she
 Sank in the soil, was trapped more certainly. 90
 Masking her graceful legs she saw that wood
 Grew from her toes which she but lately could
 Have seen, and when she let her right hand rest
 Upon her thigh, she found hard oak. Her breast
 And shoulders turned to oak, and you'd declare

That, when she stretched her arms out, then and there
 They were real branches. Still not satisfied,
 Bacchus resolved to leave and thus reside
 Elsewhere and therefore, with a worthier band,
 He sought the vineyards in his own dear land 100
 Of Mt. Tmolus and the Pactolus, though
 That river, when he went there, did not flow
 In golden streams, its sands not coveted.
 While he his satyrs and bacchantes led,
 Silenus was not there, having been bound
 By his own Phrygian countrymen, who'd found
 Him crapulous with wine and stumbling
 With age, and then they led him to the king,
 Midas, who'd learned from Orpheus of Thrace
 And Eumolpus of the Athenian race 110
 The Bacchic rites, and once King Midas knew
 Him as a friend and as a bacchant, too,
 For ten full days he held a celebration.
 Then when the dawn had brought illumination
 To earth, the two of them went joyfully
 To Lydia where Midas carefully
 Gave him to Lord Bacchus, his foster-child,
 To care for. At this Bacchus broadly smiled
 And said, "Choose your reward!" - a welcome thing
 To say although extremely damaging, 120
 Because he gave an ill-advised reply:
 "At once transform to gold whatever I
 Shall touch!" Nodding with some unhappiness,
 He'd hoped to hear a worthier largesse
 Requested. Midas left delightedly
 And started to try out the quality
 Of Bacchus' words. Still doubtful of the sway
 He hoped he had, from an oak he pulled away
 A twig, which turned to gold, then from the ground
 He lifted up a dark stone, which he found 130
 Turned gold as well, and then a clod of earth,
 Touched by King Midas, suddenly gave birth
 To a nugget, and then some dry husks of grain
 Became a golden harvest, then again
 He took an apple from an apple-tree,
 Which you would surely presuppose that he
 Had from the Hesperides; and, furthermore,
 If he should merely graze a lofty door,
 It glistened; and, when in a running stream
 He washed his hands, the waves themselves would gleam 140
 And surely would have hoodwinked Danaë.
 His mind scarce held the king's expectancy.
 His servants set a table for his meal
 With bread and dainties, but at just one feel

Of his right hand, the bread solidified
 And turned to gold; and if King Midas tried
 To eat a piece of meat, as soon as he
 Had placed his teeth upon it, instantly
 It shone with flakes of gold; and Bacchus' wine,
 When mixed with water, could be seen to shine 150
 With liquid gold. The king was devastated,
 Keen to escape this opulence. He hated
 It all, for opulence could not reduce
 His hunger nor could offer welcome juice
 To ease his thirst. This torment was no less
 Than he deserved, but in his great distress
 He raised his shining arms to Heaven on high
 And moaned, "Bacchus, forgive me for what I
 Requested! I was wrong, but pity me
 And save me from what once had seemed to be 160
 A good thing!" Then, because he had confessed
 His guilt, Bacchus restored him and professed,
 "In order that you may not still remain
 Coated in gold (indeed it was inane
 To ask for it!), to Sardis go and trace
 Its waters upwards till you find their place
 Of origin, and at the mountain-spring
 Plunge in the foam, which, quick as lightning,
 Will take the gold." He did as he was told
 And thus he was released of all the gold. 170
 Today the fields are hardened near the stream,
 Which with that golden gift displays a gleam.
 Now he inhabited the wilderness
 Of woods and fields, abhorring plenteousness,
 Following Pan, remaining, though, obtuse.
 And brought upon himself yet more abuse:
 He followed Pan up to Mt. Tmolus, where
 He looked across the sea, while Pan stood there
 And boasted to the dryads of his skill
 In music as a merry tune he'd trill 180
 On waxen pipes – indeed he even dared
 To say Apollo's music when compared
 To his was mediocre. Finally
 He said he'd stand against the god to see
 Who was the better, and it was agreed
 The competition should be refereed
 By Tmolus, who sat down and shook away
 The trees out of his ears, just an array
 Of oak-leaves in his hair, acorns beside
 His hollow temples. To Pan he replied, 190
 "I'll be the judge for you without delay":
 And Midas felt delight to hear him play
 His rustic notes upon his pipe, and when

He'd finished, Tmolus turned to Phoebus, then
 The wood did likewise. Phoebus' bright locks lay
 Beneath a wreath of fresh Parnassian bay;
 His robe of Tyrian purple swept the ground;
 His left hand held his lyre, which was bound
 With jewels and with Indian ivory;
 His right hand held the plectrum, and, as he 200
 Stood there before the judge, he touched each string
 With his proficient thumb – a charming thing
 To hear. Delighted with Apollo's skill,
 The ancient judge instructed Pan to still
 His reeds, delighted by the lovely sound
 Apollo made. This pleased all those around
 But Midas, who objected to the rule.
 The Delian god decided, though, to school
 His ears into a different shape and drew 210
 Them to a hideous length and filled them, too,
 With grey hairs, making them wag at the base,
 Though he remained one of the human race
 Elsewhere: his long ears were an ass's ears.
 This made him anxious to assuage his fears
 By hiding them inside a turban. He
 Who trimmed his hair, though, this duplicity
 Discovered and, although he did not dare
 Reveal the infamy, he longed to share
 It with the world and went off quietly 220
 And in the earth's soil dug a cavity
 And told what was upon Midas's head
 In whispers and then buried all he'd said
 With earth. A grove thick-set with leaves began
 To grow there and, a year after the man
 Had left, betrayed him. For a gentle breeze
 Disclosed to everyone his secrecies.
 His vengeance now complete, Latona's son
 Flew to the country of Laomedon,
 On this side of the Hellespontic Sea
 Named for Helle, Nephele's progeny, 230
 The prominence of Sigaeum on the right,
 Rhotaeum rising to a lofty height
 Upon the left. A shrine of Jove is there,
 The source of all predictions everywhere.
 Laomedon was building Ilium,
 Which meant much more than but a modicum
 Of toil and wealth, Apollo thought, so he
 Assumed the form of man's anatomy,
 Along with Neptune, and those two gods said
 That for a sum of gold they'd forge ahead 240
 And build its walls. The king refused to pay,
 Saying they lied. "You shall not get away

With this," said Neptune. Then against Troy's strand
 He drove his seas, thus flooding all its land,
 Then ordered the king's child, Hesione,
 To be sent to the monster of the sea,
 Which Hercules from her harsh rock then freed -
 And then a payment Hercules decreed -
 A string of steeds. Bereft of payment, he
 Captured the walls of Troy. Hesione 250
 Was wed to Telamon, who by his side
 Had fought. For Peleus had a goddess-bride,
 Whose father he respected even more
 Than Jupiter, his own grandfather, for
 The god had more grandsons than him, for he
 Alone was married to a deity.
 To Thetis Proteus said," You shall give birth
 To one who will surpass all deeds on earth
 Done by his father." So, although the fire
 Of love for Thetis kindled his desire, 260
 He'd not embrace her but immediately
 Insisted that his grandson Peleus be
 Wed to the maid. Haemonia had a bay
 And, like an arch, with bending arms it lay,
 As if to form a harbour, though its tide
 Was hardly deep enough, yet it would hide
 Its sand; its solid shore would not retain
 Somebody's footprint, nor did it detain
 One's steps; seaweeds in that vicinity
 Were never seen. Nearby there chanced to be 270
 A myrtle grove with berries of a hue
 Both red and black, and in its centre you
 Would find a grotto (but whether by art
 Or nature formed I could not even start
 To say). Thetis would go there many a day,
 Unclothed, upon a dolphin. As she lay
 Asleep Peleus found her and, although she,
 Moved by his words, declined his pleading, he
 Prepared to violate her. His success
 Would clearly have been well assured unless 280
 She had not modified her shape: first she
 Changed from a maid into a bird, but he
 Still held her, then she changed into a tree,
 But still he clasped her fast passionately,
 But then she was a tigress, frightening
 Peleus so much he could no longer cling
 To her. With wine and entrails of a sheep
 And incense he prayed to the lord of the deep
 Till Proteus said, "You'll have her as your bride
 If you bind her. Make sure that she is tied 290
 Tightly while she's asleep! And so, despite

Her endless changing, hold on to her tight
 Till she's herself again!", then hid below
 The waves and let the briny waters flow
 Over his final words. Low in the sky,
 The chariot of Titan now was very nigh
 The western sea when Thetis left that sea
 For her accustomed bed. As formerly,
 When Peleus tried once more to violate
 The maid, she assumed new forms again – too late! 300
 She realized her arms were forced apart.
 She sighed and said, "Only a deity's art
 Could give this power to you." Then she displayed
 Herself as Thetis. Thus seeing the maid,
 Peleus embraced her and the two became
 The parents of Achilles whose great fame
 Is well -known. Happy with his son and wife,
 Peleus now found that all things in his life
 Brought joy ,if you exclude the fact that he
 Murdered his brother – that atrocity 310
 Sent him to Trachis, exiled from his land.
 Trachis was then beneath the royal command
 Of Ceyx, who possessed the noble face
 Of Lucifer, his father. No disgrace
 By violence caused existed there. Delight
 And comfort were no longer his by right,
 For now he mourned his brother. Wholly spent
 With travelling, he left his sheep and went
 To Trachis, while Ceyx was still the king
 After so many decades, carrying 320
 An olive branch to show his probity.
 He gave the king his name and ancestry.
 He hid his crime, the reason for his flight
 Mincing, and begged the monarch that he might
 Find refuge somewhere. Then Ceyx replied,
 "Even our poorest people we provide
 With bounty and our hospitality,
 And we respect your capability.
 Your name indeed is so illustrious:
 Jove's your grandfather! Therefore, do not fuss 330
 With pleas! All you desire you will possess.
 Our land is partly yours. Yet what a mess
 We're in!" He wept, and when he was asked why,
 Said, "Do you think the hawk that hovers high
 To pounce on prey was always feathered? No,
 For he was once a man not long ago,
 Daedalion, the son of Lucifer,
 A strong and harsh and valiant warrior,
 While I, his brother, loved the quiet life
 And peace while caring for my darling wife. 340

My brother conquered cities, but today,
 Transmogrified, he is a bird of prey,
 And now he hunts the doves relentlessly,
 The pride of all Thisbe's citizenry.
 He had a daughter very fair of face,
 Chione called, and with her gentle grace
 She pleased a thousand men. When she had turned
 Fourteen, Phoebus and Mercury returned,
 One from Delphi, one from Mt. Cyllene,
 And when they saw her, both were instantly 350
 Smitten. While Phoebus waited till the night
 To lie with her, the other could not fight
 His urges, so he took his wand and laid
 It on her cheek, and instantly the maid
 Was fast asleep, and then he had his way
 With her, and when the sky showed its array
 Of stars, Phoebus assumed the identity
 Of a crone, then lay with her. When Chione
 Came to full term, she bore Autolycus,
 Who as an adult was duplicitous, 360
 Who could make white seem black and black seem white
 (Indeed his father Mercury's birthright).
 And Phoebus' child was Philammon, who became
 A singer and lute-player of great fame,
 Just like his father. But what can be gained
 From having two sons and having attained
 Two gods' love and with famous ancestry?
 Glory harms many folk, and certainly
 It hurt Chione, because she decried
 Diana's beauty. The goddess replied 370
 With threatening anger, for her bow she bent
 And sent an arrow from the string, which went
 Straight through Chione's tongue. She tried to say
 Something but saw her life ebbing away.
 I hugged her in a father's misery
 And to my brother I consolingly
 Spoke words of comfort, but he might as well
 Have been a cliff that never hears the swell
 Of surging seas, while mourning bitterly.
 But when he saw her body burning, he 380
 Four times appeared to be about to throw
 Himself into the flames, so full of woe
 Was he. But then he rushed in headlong flight
 To roam the wasteland, as a bullock might.
 His neck by hornets bitten, he could run,
 It seemed to me, faster than anyone
 On earth. You'd think his feet had wings, for he
 Left us all far behind, so anxiously
 Did he seek death. Parnassus' height he sought,

And when he stood there finally, it taught
 Apollo pity when Daedalion flew
 Over the cliff, Apollo changed him to
 A bird, supporting him on suddenly-
 Formed wings, and gave him back his bravery
 And strength. So to all birds he's merciless
 And, as a hawk, delivers great distress.”
 While Ceyx told this wondrous tale about
 His brother's life, there was a sudden shout -
 Onetor, whom Peleus had allocated
 To watch his bullock herd, abruptly stated,
 “Peleus, sad news!” They listened to the man,
 Ceyx and Peleus, as he then began,
 “I drove the weary bullocks to the strand
 At noon. Some of them lay down on the sand,
 Some wandered and some in the water stood.
 Nearby there is a temple made of wood
 Within an ancient grove. There Nereu's and
 His lovely Nereids dwelt (upon the strand
 A sailor who was drying his nets told me
 They ruled those waters). In proximity
 A wasteland, choked with many willows, stood.
 A monster-wolf roamed in that neighbourhood,
 Making a loud, uncanny crashing sound.
 It terrified the people all around,
 Breaking out of the swap, all stained with mud,
 Its jaws covered with foam and clotted blood,
 Eyes flashing flames of crimson, and, despite
 His hunger, he preferred to use his might
 In killing all the herd rather than feed
 On those that he had killed, as if indeed
 At war. He killed some of us as we tried
 To save them. Thus the shore and closest tide
 Are red with blood, and groaning everywhere
 Comes from the cattle. And therefore beware!
 Before we're all destroyed, we must unite
 And bear our weapons for the cause of right.”
 But Peleus was not stirred because he thought
 Psamathe, Phocus' mother, thereby sought
 His obsequies. For Peleus surely knew
 His guilt. Then Ceyx ordered his men to
 Put armour on, while he prepared to be
 Their chieftain. But his wife Alcyone
 Rushed to him with her hair in disarray:
 She clung to him while begging him to stay
 And yet send help, so that not one but two
 Of them might live. “It's very good of you
 To worry, lady,” Peleus said. “Although
 You offer aid, it's needless. I must go

And mitigate the goddess of the sea.
 We must unite or all is misery!" 440
 A lofty tower is there, whose signal-flame
 Burns night and day, achieving grateful fame
 From ships, and from its top they sighed to see
 The mangled cattle scattered randomly
 Along the shore, and there among that horde
 They saw the wolf. So Peleus then implored,
 With outstretched hands, the sea-born Psamathe
 To lose her wrath and offer remedy.
 His prayers had no effect on her, although
 Thetis prevailed. The wolf, though, would not go 450
 And when the sea-nymph bade him turn aside,
 His keen ferocity was magnified
 By tasting new sweet blood, till she, while he
 Was seizing the last heifer ruthlessly,
 Changed him to marble., and, though he retained
 His wolf-like structure, he no more remained
 A cause of fear. But Peleus could not stay
 Behind and by the Fates was forced to stray
 In exile. To Magnesia he hied
 And of his sinfulness was purified 460
 By King Acastus. Meanwhile Ceyx, king
 Of Trachis, found his brother troubling,
 Concerned about his life to come, and so
 At Claros sought the shrine of Apollo,
 For Phorbas and his Phlegyans had blocked
 The way to Delphi. Alcyone was shocked
 To hear of this, and over her sad face
 A boxwood-pallor spread and tears would chase
 Each other down her cheeks. Three times she tried
 To speak to him until at last she sighed, 470
 "What have I done? Where is that care for me
 Which always has been your priority,
 My dearest? Can you go so far away
 With no concern at all, while I must stay?
 Will travel be a pleasant change for you?
 Will that delight you, then, more than I do?
 I think I would but grieve if you should go
 By land, but cruel seas affright me so.
 I've lately seen shipwrecks upon the shore,
 And empty tombs upset me even more 480
 That mourn lost sailors. Let false certainty
 Not bolster you since Aeolus happens to be
 My father! He's Lord of the Winds, of course,
 And smooths the ocean waves while you, their source,
 Can calm the seas, but once you set them free
 Nothing can check their churning of the sea.
 They cause the lightning-flashes which collide.

The more I look, the more I'm terrified
 (For as a child I saw them frequently).
 If I can't move you, dearest, then take me 490
 With you, for then, if we are in distress,
 At least I'll know my apprehensiveness
 And so we'll bear whatever will occur
 Together." Ceyx then was moved by her
 Because he loved her just as passionately
 As she loved him. To quit his odyssey
 He still was loath and even more to board
 The ship with her, and so, as she implored,
 He tried in many a fashion comforting
 His wife, though dubious still. But then one thing 500
 He hit upon which pacified her breast:
 "I know this makes you sorrowful, but rest
 Assured, for by my father's light I vow
 To you, my dear one, if the Fates allow,
 In two months I'll return." Her expectation
 Now reawakened, with no hesitation
 He ordered that the ship be brought to shore
 And fitted out with gear, but now once more
 She shook as if she saw some dreadful fate
 Oppressing her and gave way to a spate 510
 Of tears. In her distress she said "Farewell,
 Husband!" and then her nerveless body fell.
 Ceyx longed for a reason to delay,
 But his young oarsmen, keen to row away,
 Pulled on their oars. Meanwhile, Alcyone
 Wept for Ceyx's leaving her as she
 Gazed at him on the stern. He waved his hand
 And she returned his wave. Then from the land
 The ship moved on till she could barely see
 His well-loved face, and yet she doggedly 520
 Looked at the topsails waving from the mast,
 But, when this was not possible, at last
 She sought her lonely couch, on which she lay,
 Where she was overwhelmed with her dismay.
 The winds now blew, and so it was decreed
 To ship the oars, necessitating speed,
 So that upon the mast they might then spread
 The sails, thereby causing full speed ahead.
 The ship not half-way there, land out of sight,
 The sea with greater waves was growing white. 530
 As night came on and winds mightily blew,
 The captain duteously warned his crew,
 "Lower the topsails! Now! Immediately!
 Reef every sail!" The wind, though, thoroughly
 Drowned out his words. Some of his men, though, drew
 The oars in while some others of the crew

Secured the sides; some pulled the sails away,
 Some rushed into the ship's hold so that they
 Might pump the water that had gathered there.
 The storm increased, and fierce winds everywhere 540
 Waged war. Even the captain, terrified,
 Confessed himself unable to decide
 About the status of the ship, for he
 Was skill-less to contain the savagery
 Of the winds, and there was yelling all around,
 The rigging straining, and there was the sound
 Of heavy seas and thunder, Rising high,
 The waves appeared to be part of the sky.
 The sea turned yellow from the sands now churned,
 But sometimes it was black, sometimes it turned 550
 A foamy white. Sometimes the ship would rise
 And seem as if it gazed down from the skies
 At Acheron, sometimes it sank as though
 It stared at Heaven from the depths below.
 Sometimes against the sides the flood would strike
 With a huge crash, and it was not unlike
 An iron ram or bolt. As lions who
 Might muster up their sturdiness anew
 And charge the huntsmen's spears, so did the sea
 Attack the ship with such velocity 560
 That it was higher than the slanting mast.
 The bolts came loose, the planks themselves held fast
 No longer, robbed of wax, and often seams
 Appeared, through which the waves poured forth in streams.
 Vast shafts of rain gushed down so suddenly
 It seemed that Heaven was flung into the sea
 While waves flew high. The sails were saturated
 With rain, with which the waves amalgamated;
 The starless sky was inky black, the night
 Was doubly so, through lack of natural light 570
 And the storm's gloominess; the skies were split
 By lightning-flashes and the rain was lit
 By flares. Now waves began to rush onto
 The vessel, and, just like a soldier who
 Is braver than the others in his raid
 Against a city and at last has made
 Successful inroads, keen for glory, goes
 Over the wall alone among his foes,
 A thousand of them, so, after nine waves,
 The tenth one surges as it surely craves 580
 To make assault and does not cease until
 It wrecks the ship. Part of the sea was still
 Attempting this, part was already there
 Inside. There was confusion everywhere,
 As when beleaguered cities find a threat

That's coming from outside the walls and yet
They're threatened, too, within. Proficiency
Was failing and a lack of bravery
Was evident. As many people died
As were the waves advancing on the tide. 590

One sailor wept, one fell down panic-struck,
One called the dead the only ones in luck,
One prayed, beseeching some good deity
To save him from the deep, but fruitlessly.
Some thought of kin or anything they'd left
Behind, but Ceyx, of his wife bereft,
Thought only of Alcyone. Though he
Longed for her, he was gratified that she
Was safe at home. Ah, how he tried to find
A glimpse of his own land, now left behind! 600

But which way should he look? He did not know,
For all around the sea was whirling so,
With all the black clouds hidden from his sight,
That it doubled the image of the night.
The mast and helm were shattered. Over all
A giant wave hung there as if to fall
Upon the ship – and then inevitably
It did, and it came down so heavily
As if Athos or Pindus had been whirled 610

And sank the ship. The main part of the crew
Now met their fate, the others clinging to
The flotsam. Ceyx grabbed something to stay
Afloat and earnestly began to pray
To Lucifer and Aeolus, but all
In vain! Primarily, though, he would call
Upon his wife. He hankered for the sea
To bear him to his home that he might be
Entombed by her dear hands. As long as he
Could swim and speak, he said, "Alcyone!" 620

(Then echoed by the waves) till a black sweep
Of water leapt above the briny deep
And drowned him. Lucifer shed little light
At dawn and, since he could not leave the height
Of Heaven, he allowed the clouds to screen
His grief. Meanwhile, Alcyone had been
Counting the nights while hastening to prepare
The clothes that she was keen for him to wear
On his return, and hers as well. She vowed
His safe return, but that was not allowed 630

By fate. She offered incense piously,
Mostly to Juno, for one Destiny
Had doomed. She prayed that he would reach their shore
In safety and that he would love her more
Than any other, though but this one prayer

Was granted her. Juno, though, was aware
 That she could not accept for one who's dead
 These supplications but thought she instead
 Might turn her death-polluted hands away
 For her own shrines and said without delay, 640
 "Iris, of all my messengers the best,
 Go quickly to the heavy court of Rest
 And bid him send a dream that's in the shape
 Of Ceyx! That his wife may not escape
 The woeful truth, tell her he's dead!" Thus she
 Gave her command, and Iris instantly
 Assumed her garment traced with many a hue
 And crossed the sky: as she was ordered to,
 She went to find that monarch's sanctuary,
 Hidden beneath a cloud. There one could see 650
 A deep cave where he lives, a fabled place
 Where one can never see a single trace
 Of dawn or noon or when approaching night
 Sends rays. Clouds, fog and shadows of half-light
 Breathe from the ground, and gloom is all around.
 No rooster greets the dawn with piercing sound,
 No animals dwell there; trees are not heard
 To whisper as they sway; no human word
 Is spoken. From beneath a rock below
 The Lethean waters ooze, murmuring low, 600
 Inviting sleep. Rich poppies grow before
 The entrance, and a wealth of herbs, what's more,
 Grow in abundance in that place, whose juices
 The dew-wet night gathers and thus induces
 Repose across the darkened earth. In case
 A turning hinge lets out a creak, that place
 Does not have doors or guards. But there's a bed,
 Of ebony made, downy, black-hued and spread
 With a grey sheet where Rest lies, free of care,
 In slumber, and around him, here and there, 670
 Lie empty dreams, as many as you'll see
 Corn-ears at harvest, leaves upon a tree
 Or grains of sand that have been cast ashore.
 The nymph first brushed aside the dreams before
 Her eyes, and then the luminosity
 Of what she wore lit up the sanctuary.
 The god, his eyes still heavy from his rest,
 Kept dropping his chin down upon his chest.
 But, finally awake, although her name
 He knew, he nonetheless asked why she came 680
 To him. She said, "Divine Repose, o Rest,
 Of all the deities the gentlest,
 Peace to the troubled mind, which with repose
 You dispossess all men of cares and woes,

Call up a dream of Ceyx! Let it go
 To Queen Alcyone that she may know
 That in the shipwreck he was drowned! This you
 Must know Juno has ordered me to do."
 She left, no longer able to endure
 The slumber-vapour, for, once she was sure 690
 It was affecting her with lethargy,
 She fled upon the rainbow just as she
 Had done before. The god then, who possessed
 A thousand sons, called him who than the rest
 Knew more about the craft of simulating
 The human form, expert at indicating
 The sound of speech, and Morpheus is his name.
 With clothes and accents he could seem the same
 As men. Another of his sons could be
 A wild beast or a bird or snake, and he 700
 Is called Ikelos by all the gods, although
 He's called Phobetor by all those below
 The Heavens. A third, of diverse artistry,
 Called Phantasos, assumes illusory
 Shapes of inanimate things like stones or trees
 Or earth or rivers. And all three of these
 Can show themselves as general or king,
 While others are adept at altering.
 Their shape to common folk. The god of sleep
 Passed by them all, for Morpheus he would keep 710
 For this one task. And then he dropped his head
 In languished drowsiness upon his bed.
 Morpheus flew mutely through the jet-black sky
 And in no time at all he drew close by
 Haemonia. He lay his wings aside
 And soon he could have been identified
 As Ceyx. Naked, wan and as one dead,
 He stood beside his wife Alcyone's bed.
 His beard seemed wet and from his eyes there went
 Streams of sea-water. On the bed he leant 720
 As dripping tears were pouring from his eyes.
 "Poor darling wife, do you not recognize
 Your dear Ceyx," he said. "Or do you see,
 Because of my demise, a different me?
 I am your own and yet I'm but my wraith.
 Alas, the prayers in which you had such faith
 Did not prevail. On the Aegean Sea
 My vessel was attacked ferociously
 By tempests from the south and thus was cast
 About and shattered by a mighty blast 770
 The angry waters closed about my head.
 It is no idle messenger who's said
 This to you. No, it's I, your darling mate,

Come from the wreck to tell you of my fate.
 Come, shed your tears for me! Don mourning black!
 Don't send me down to Hades while I lack
 A mourner!" Morpheus used the voice that she
 Would know as his, his tears shed naturally:
 His gestures, too, were his. Alcyone wept
 And groaned, and, as she desperately swept 740
 Her arms about, endeavouring to grasp
 A phantom body, she let out a gasp
 And cried out loudly, "Stay! Why hurry so
 From your own darling wife? No, let us go
 Together!" Agitated violently
 By her own voice and what appeared to be
 Her husband, she awoke and looked around
 For him. The servants, though, had by the sound
 She made been roused and so they hurried there
 With lights. She could not find him anywhere. 750
 Despairingly she struck her face and rent
 The garment from her body; in torment
 She beat her breast and loosed her hair. When she
 Was questioned by her nurse, "Alcyone,"
 She said, "is dead! Ceyx's gone! He's lost!
 No words of consolation! Tempest-tossed,
 He drowned. I saw his ghost – it came to me.
 I longed to keep it there but instantly
 It vanished. He looked different, it's true,
 Than when he lived upon the earth, should you 760
 Ask me about him. Pale, with dripping hair
 And naked, my poor husband stood right there."
 She sought his footprints. "Ah, this was my fear
 When I beseeched you not to leave me here.
 Would I had gone with you! For then would I
 Have always been with you, fated to die
 In your dear company. So far apart
 From you, I drift on my own sea! My heart
 Would be more cruel than the angry sea
 That brought about your death to ask of me 770
 To bear this life of grief. I will not strive
 To leave you so forlorn and stay alive -
 I'll follow you. At least a eulogy
 Upon a stone shall for eternity
 Unite us two, if not an urn, and so
 Our names will be united even though
 We're far apart." Grief-stricken, that was all
 That she could say, although she still would call
 To him in wails. The next day at cockcrow
 She went down to the shore and, in her woe, 780
 She stood upon the spot whence he had gone
 And sadly said, "He lingered here upon

The shore. He set the cables loose, we kissed
 And then he left." While she was in this mist
 Of recollection, she looked on the sea
 And saw some floating thing. Primarily,
 It puzzled her, but then she recognized
 A corpse. Since it was distant, she surmised
 It was an omen and she wept and said,
 "Oh, wretched is the wife who knows you're dead!" 790
 It floated nearer, and she less and less
 Was mistress of herself in her distress.
 As it came closer she identified
 Her husband. "It is he," she loudly cried.
 Her face, her hair, her royal robe she tore,
 Then she held out her trembling hands before
 His corpse and cried aloud, "Ah, are you here
 Before me once again, my husband dear?"
 There is a man-made mole athwart the sea,
 That checks the tides, and she amazingly 800
 With new-found wings flew to it, sorrowing.
 She skimmed the waves, her sad voice warbling
 Her grief from her hard beak, and when she found
 The body, she placed both her wings around
 Ceyx and kissed his cold lips fruitlessly.
 Those who observed this had their doubts that he
 Felt it or merely seemed to raise his face
 Above the waves, but by the gods' god grace
 Both were made halcyons and yet they're still
 In love, a love that neither wing nor bill 810
 Has weakened. They soon coupled and became
 Patents, their love remaining just the same.
 And in the wintertime Alcyone,
 Throughout the full week of tranquillity,
 Sits brooding, for there are no hurricanes
 Or thunderstorms and Aeolus contains
 The winds within his cave. An ancient man
 Saw these two birds across the ocean's span
 And praised their everlasting love, and he
 Said to his friend, "There is another – see? - 820
 That skims the waves with legs drawn up." He said
 These words and then he pointed straight ahead
 At a long-throated diver. "Long ago
 It was a prince, and, if you'd like to know
 His ancestry, it started from Ilus
 And Ganymede and from Assaracus
 And Jupiter and old Laomedon
 And Priam, ruler of lost Ilion.
 Aesacus was the brother of the great
 Illustrious Hector and, but for a fate 830
 He suffered in his youth, would have achieved

An equal fame. Hector had been conceived
 By Hecuba, though Alexhirroë,
 The child of Granicus, had secretly
 Birthed Aesacus beneath Mt. Ida's shade.
 He loathed the city and so he often made
 His way to pastoral places far away
 From court, where through the mountains would he stray.
 He rarely stayed in Troy, although genteel,
 And all the joys of passion could he feel. 840
 He often chased Hesperia, the child
 Of River Cebren, through the woodland's wild
 Bucolic haunts. He'd seen her as she dried
 Her flowing tresses in the sun beside
 Her father's streams. The nymph, though, fled on sight,
 As hinds avoid a tawny wolf by flight
 Or ducks a hawk. But he would persevere,
 As full of love as she was full of fear.
 A snake struck at her rosy heel, and thus
 It left within her flesh its poisonous 850
 Venom and sounseasonably she died.
 He frantically embraced her form and cried,
 'Alas, alas, a dreadful fate has crossed
 Your path! Success has come at such a cost!
 The snake and I have caused your death – he bit
 Your heel and I have been the cause of it.
 Mine is the greater guilt, so I shall give
 You solace for it – I'll no longer live!"
 And as he spoke, he leapt down from a high
 Escarpment that had been eroded by 860
 The cruel seas. Tethys, in sympathy
 For his rash action, caught him tenderly
 And gave him feathers and thereby disclaimed
 The option for the death for which he aimed.
 Incensed that he'd been forced to live in woe,
 He flew aloft and to the waves below
 Propelled himself. But he was now a bird.
 Yet his attempt to kill himself occurred
 Time and again. His love unsatisfied,
 His body now became so rarefied 870
 His leg joints grew as did his neck, his head
 Far from his body. Ever since, he's fed
 Upon the waves. From diving in the sea
 His given name will last eternally.